

The Crusades and the Jews

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The impact of the first Crusade on Jewish life

1.

Shelomo Bar Shimshon

On the New Moon of Sivan, Count Emicho, the oppressor of all the Jews - may his bones be ground to dust between iron millstones - arrived outside the city with a mighty horde of errant ones and peasants. They encamped in tents, since the gates of the city were closed, for he, too, had said: "I desire to follow the stray course." He was made leader of the hordes and concocted a tale that an apostle of the crucified one had come to him and made a sign on his flesh to inform him that when he arrived at Italya of Greece (Dalmatia), he [Jesus] himself would appear and place the kingly crown upon his head, and Emicho would vanquish his foes. This man was chief of our oppressors.

At this time, when the evildoer arrived at Mainz on his way to Jerusalem, the elders of the Jewish community approached their bishop, Ruthard, and bribed him with three hundred zekukim of silver. Ruthard had intended to journey to the villages that were subject to the authority of the bishops, but the Jewish community came and bribed and entreated him, until they persuaded him to remain in Mainz, and he took the entire community into his inner chamber, with the words: "I have agreed to aid you." The count, too, declared: "I also wish to remain here in order to help you, but you will have to provide all our needs until those who bear the symbol have passed"; and the community agreed to these terms.

On the third day of Sivan, at midday, the evil Emicho, oppressor of the Jews, came to the gate with his entire horde. The townspeople opened the gate to him, and the enemies of the Lord said to one another: "See, they have opened the gate for us; now let us avenge the blood of the crucified one.

When the people of the Holy Covenant, the saints, the fearers of the Most High, saw the great multitude, a vast horde of them, as the sand upon the seashore, they clung to their Creator. They donned their armor and their weapons of war, adults and children alike, with Rabbi Kalonymos, the son of Rabbi Meshullam, the Parnass, at their head. But, as a result of their sufferings and fasts, they did not have the strengths to withstand the

onslaught of the foe. The troops and legions surged in like a streaming river until finally Mainz was completely overrun from end to end. Emicho had it rumored that the enemy was to be driven from the city, and the Lord's panic was great within the city.

The bishop's people, who had promised to help them, being as broken reedstuffs, and they fled.

All of them declared willingly and wholeheartedly, "After all things, there is no questioning the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He and blessed be His Name, Who has given us His Torah and has commanded us to allow ourselves to be killed and slain in witness to the Oneness of His Holy Name. Happy are we if we fulfill His will, and happy is he who is slain or slaughtered and who dies attesting the Oneness of His Name.

Then in a great voice they all cried out as one: "We need tarry no longer, for the enemy is already upon us. Let us hasten and offer ourselves as a sacrifice before God. Anyone possessing a knife should examine it to see that it is not defective, and let him then proceed to slaughter us in sanctification of the Unique and Eternal One, then slaying himself - either cutting his throat or thrusting the knife into his stomach."

2.

Werner, Glaber, and Rupert

GLABER The [word of the attack] spread through the whole world. And by the common consent of all Christians, it was decreed that Jews should be chased out of the lands and cities where they dwelled; and [thus they were and were slaughtered]. . (a few lines down, Glaber says that) [soon Jews appeared again], and he adds that "it was decreed by the bishops that no Christian should associated with a Jew, unless the Jew expressed a desire to convert."

WERNER Werner suffers [it is said], in place of Christ (loco Christi): For since the Jews could not have the corpus verum, they took their wrath out on Werner, the corpus mysticum.... Werner suffered, too, as Christ (in Christo), for the blessed child was made part of Christ's body... Werner also suffered for Christ (pro Christo), for since the Jews could not lay their hands on Christ reigning in heaven, they persecuted his Christian devotee. Indeed, he suffered for Christ (pro Christo), for just as Christ underwent the passion so that the Christian could be saved, so Werner underwent a passion for Christ's benefit (propter Christum), so that the faith be exalted.

RUPERT Rupert of Deutz made the same point, although exegetically, in his *De Sancte Trinitate*. Commenting on Lamentations 4:2-5, Rupert wrote:

Though even the lamia [a kind of female demon] bares her breast to feed her pups, the daughter of my people is cruel like the ostrich. The lamia is a monstrous animal. Its name means tearing<4.>Yet it has a natural affection toward its young [and feeds them]<4.>But the daughter of my people is very cruel and has not even bared her breast [like the ostrich that scatters its eggs in the desert]<4.>On top of that, she killed it, saying, “his blood is on us” [Matt. 27:25]. [Hence] from then until today, the tongue of the nursing infant clings to its palate; and there is no one to break bread for the children who are asking it. They have too much hunger and thirst to hear the word of God, not because they want the word of God, but because they [the mothers] prefer [the children] to perish rather than to break for themselves the bread of the scriptures that they might live from the marrow of spiritual understanding.

3.

Sicut iudaeis

Innocent III:

Constitution for the Jews (1199 AD)

Although in many ways the disbelief of the Jews must be reprov'd, since nevertheless through them our own faith is truly proved, they must not be oppress'd grievously by the faithful as the prophet says: “Do not slay them, lest these be forgetful of Thy Law,” [Ps. 58 (59):12] as if he were saying more openly: “Do not wipe out the Jews completely, lest perhaps Christians might be able to forget Thy Law, which the former, although not understanding it, present in their books to those who do understand it.”

Just as, therefore there ought not to be license for the Jews to presume to go beyond what is permitted them by law in their synagogues, so in those which have been conceded to them, they ought to suffer no prejudice. These men, therefore, since they wish rather to go on in their own hardness than to know the revelations of the prophets and the mysteries of the Law, and to come to a knowledge of the Christian faith, still, since they beseech the help of Our defense, We, out of the meekness proper to Christian piety, and keeping in the footprints of Our predecessors of happy memory, the Roman Pontiffs Calixtus, Eugene, Alexander, Clement, and Celestine, admit their petition, and We grant them the buckler of Our protection.

For we make the law that no Christian compel them, unwilling or refusing, by violence to come to baptism. But if any one of them should spontaneously, and for the sake of faith, fly to the Christians, once his choice has become evident, let him be made a Christian without any calumny. Indeed, he is not considered to possess the true faith of the Christianity who is recognized to have come to Christian baptism, not spontaneously, but unwillingly.

Too, no Christian ought to presume, apart from the juridical sentence of the territorial power, wickedly to injure their persons, or with violence to take away their property, or to change the good customs which they have had until now in whatever region they inhabit.

Besides, in the celebration of their own festivals, no one ought to disturb them in any way, with clubs or stones, nor ought any one try to require from them or to extort from them services they do not owe, except for those they have been accustomed from times past to perform.

In addition to these, We decree, blocking the wickedness and avarice of evil men, that no one ought to dare to mutilate or diminish a Jewish cemetery, nor, in order to get money, to exhume bodies once they have been buried.

If anyone, however shall attempt, the tenor of this decree once known, to go against it - may this be far from happening! - let him be punished by the vengeance of excommunication, unless he correct his presumption by making equivalent satisfaction.

We desire, however, that only those be fortified by the guard of this protection who shall have presumed no plotting for the subversion of the Christian faith.

Given at the Lateran, by the hand of Raynaldus, Archbishop of Acerenza, acting for the Chancellor, on the 17th day before the Kalends of October, in the second indiction, and the 1199th year of the Incarnation of the Lord, and in the second year of the pontificate of the Lord Pope, Innocent III.

4.

The 1007 Anonymous

I have found none, save God, who stands above you [the pope] as a ruler in the lands of the Nations; for you are the Head of the Nations and the ruler over them. . . . So I came to cry out about my ills from the Jews who live under your jurisdiction. For evil men have arisen without your sanction, and they have attacked the Jews (using force to make

them convert to Christianity) [Addressing the Duke of Normandy, the author wrote that) you do not have the governance over the Jews to make them leave their Torah . . . That [power] belongs only to the pope of Rome.

5.

Jacob of Venice Maestro Andrea

You will look around you; people from every part will come before you. One will say: "Take good care of your comings and goings," and another: "May your coming be a blessing." A third, however, will say: "What you have begun, finish;" -a fourth: "Be on guard for your soul;" -a fifth: "Be on the watch not to ruin your reputation among us;" -a sixth: "Be strong and a man;" -a seventh: "If you are false to our 'Torah,' you will pay with your life;" -an eighth: "Guard your tongue and what you say, and keep yourself far from trouble." There are also those among them who will whisper, saying: "See how great is our wisdom and how clever we are; they have brought us an 'Ish 'ivri (a Jewish man) to mock us. But [Jews like him] are the lowly and the despised, the rash and the foolish. They are gluttons and drunkards, as we can plainly see. And when they are naked, barefoot, and worked up into a lather, they will go to a place where they are not recognized, and there they will return to their Jewish origins."

6.

Sefer Hasidim

INTRODUCTION, ELAZAR OF WORMS, "Harokeah," to Sefer Hasidim

They received the secret of ordering the prayers and the other secrets from Abu Aaron . . . who came to Lombardy, to the city of Lucca, where he found R. Moshe {ben Kalonymos} who wrote the <'Eimat nora'otekhah> and passed onto him all the secrets. He was R. Moshe ben Kalonymos ben R. Meshullam ben R. Kaloxylos ben R. Yehudah. He was the first to leave Lombardy, he and his sons, R. Kalonymos and R. Yequtiel, and his cousin, R. Itiel, and other worthy people whom King Charles brought with him from Lombardy and settled in Mainz. There they flourished {until 1096}. Then we were wiped out, except for a few who remained of our family {our relatives}, along with R. Kalonymos the Elder. He passed {the secrets} on to R. Eleazar, the Hazzan of Speyer, as we wrote, and R. Eleazar . . . to R. Samuel the Pietist, and {then} to R. Judah the Pietist {his son}. From him, I {his cousin} received the secrets of prayer and other secrets.

To 'Fearers of the Lord' will I write . . . to show them how to fear the Lord; and they will teach their sons {and daughters}. Not that I am {a greater} <Hakham> than anyone else of my generation; my good deeds and learning are insignificant. Indeed, in this generation, there are <Hakhamim> in matters of Torah and in all <Hokhmah> {Wisdom} and deeds. There are also those who fear more than I do. Yet, because of their great Wisdom, they juggle (literally, make {sometimes overly} fine logical distinctions in) the {Talmudic} text, whose wisdom is infinite. So it appears to me that {one must distinguish} between those who {indiscriminately} fear the Lord, . . . and Pietists. There is {also} the Pietist Sage. He {bears that title because} he learned {wisdom and pietism} from his Rav {teacher}. What his fellow failed {to achieve in these realms} is because he did not learn from a Rav.

{Now} we have learned in the Torah that each one who is capable of {learning and} understanding--even though he has not been {explicitly} commanded to do so--is punished for shirking his responsibility.

Consequently, one should be clever {resourceful} in knowledge (B.T. Berachot 17a). For he is punished, if he does not know what he should have been learning and studying. Before the Ruler {of the Universe} one cannot say: 'It was an accident.' It was for this reason that I set out to write a book for the 'Fearers of the Lord,' {to warn them} lest they be punished and think {their punishment} was without justification ..

{They must also be warned} that if a fellow <Haver> is punished and he {the Fearer} does not {fore}warn him . . . all the punishment will be ascribed to his {the Fearer's} account, since it is the same as if he {the Fearer} had killed him {the fellow}.